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First day of tight restrictions finds NC at home and on edge

JULIA WALL jwall@newsobserver.com

Giovanni Cordova, who works for Talon Medical Construction Services, worked Wednesday on building a barrier wall for UNC REX Hospital's Special Respiratory Isolation Unit.

BY MARTHA QUILLIN
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Health officials announced new cases of coronavirus across North Carolina on Wednesday as the virus continues to spread despite the closure of schools, offices, restaurants, bars, and some hotels and retail stores.

Some residents have retreated to their homes, while others work and shop despite the risk.

As of Wednesday evening, North Carolina has 92 known cases of the illness, including 11 new cases in Durham County; five new cases in Wake County, bringing the county total to 22; and three new cases in Mecklenburg County that bring the total there to 14.

Buncombe County announced its first case of the virus. County health officials said the person is in isolation in Macon County. Lincoln, Hoke, Moore, Union and New Hanover counties also announced their first cases, and Watauga County reported its second case.

The state announced its first known case of the virus on March 3. The virus has now been found in 23 of the state's 100 counties.

With the spread of the illness picking up speed, state and federal officials have reached out to the N.C. Baptists on Mission to ask for help in case it's necessary to set up kitchens to help feed people who are isolated by the coronavirus or whose source of food has been interrupted.

The Baptist group is a Cary-based non-profit disaster-relief agency that has responded to natural calamities across the country and around the world. It draws on thousands of volunteers from throughout the Unit-

SEE CORONAVIRUS, 8A

UNC Health lab has developed, deployed a new coronavirus test

BY BRIAN MURPHY AND KATE MURPHY
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WASHINGTON

A new test for COVID-19, developed by scientists at UNC-Chapel Hill, is now being used for UNC Health patients after a wait for federal guidance.

North Carolina has more than four dozen cases of coronavirus, which causes COVID-19. The number of cases has risen sharply in recent days. The number of cases in North Carolina could reach 4,000 by early April, at least one epidemiologist said.

The lack of testing across the United States has been "a failing," according to the nation's top infectious disease official.

But the new test developed by UNC doesn't rely on supplies from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. UNC began using the test Monday after getting updated guidance from the Food and Drug Administration.

"The benefit for our test is really our turnaround time," said Melissa Miller, the director of the Clinical Microbiology and Molecular Microbiology Labs at UNC Medical Center. "We reserve the test for patients for whom that makes the biggest difference."

The test, for now, is available for inpatient use at UNC Medical Center, UNC REX Hospital, UNC Health affiliate hospitals and some UNC Health clinics.

UNC Health is made up of 11 hospitals and hundreds of clinics across the state. The test was developed by clinical microbiology experts at UNC Medical Center and the UNC School of Medicine.

HOW DOES THE TEST WORK?

The highly complex test starts with a swab from a patient at a health-care facility, which is then shipped to UNC's lab.

The lab is able to run the test on several swabs at a time and

SEE TEST, 2A

CHANGES TO YOUR PAPER

In an effort to help us give you as much information as possible about the coronavirus pandemic, you may notice that we've moved some content to other sections. This is a temporary measure, and content will return to its usual place as soon as possible.

NYT

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TAKING CARE DURING THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

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